DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 389 036 CS 509 100

AUTHOR Winsor, Jerry L.; And Others
TITLE Assessment as a Unifier of Teaching and Research.
PUB DATE Apr 95
NOTE 19p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Central States Communication Association (Indianapolis, IN, April 19-23, 1995).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Viewpoints (Opinion/Position Papers, Essays, etc.) (120)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Constructivism (Learning); *Educational Assessment; Educational Change; *Evaluation Methods; Higher Education; Learning Processes; Portfolio Assessment; *Student Evaluation; *Total Quality Management
IDENTIFIERS Capstone Programs; *Central Missouri State University

ABSTRACT

The convergence of the teaching as assessment movement and Total Quality Management (TQM) has implications for higher education, and communication department should adapt their pedagogy to the best of the thrusts in higher education. The Department of Communication at Central Missouri State University contains 2 of the original 10 programs that started the TQM-driven "Continuous Process Improvement" on that campus. Current models of learning, stemming from cognitive psychology, emphasize the constructivist view that the student must be an active participant in the learning process. The assessment as learning and TQM convergence may suggest to faculty that a university degree should be granted only when agreed-upon abilities can be demonstrated. The movement from an emphasis on competition to a stated curriculum of cooperative, problem-solving activities coupled with collaborative learning approaches will be a challenge for faculty. Assessment should not be an end in itself and should be based upon the notion that learning is complex, multidimensional, and integrated. Steps in the process for creating ability assessment activities include deciding on outcomes, examining learning materials, deciding on students' final products, identifying specific skills for successful completion of the task, providing activities that honor different learning styles, and developing a scoring rubric which clearly identifies performance standards. The Communication Department has applied these principles by conducting national studies of what employers expect of graduates, establishing a professional advisory board, adopting capstone experiences for students, adopting a portfolio approach to assessment, and developing a mission statement. (Contains 10 references.) (RS)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 389 036

Assessment As A Unifier of Teaching And Research

Jerry L. Winsor, Ph.D., Professor of Speech Communication, Kathryn S. Carr, Ed.D. Professor of Curriculum & Instruction, Dan B. Curtis, Chair, Ph.D. Department of Communication, and Charlene Odle, MA, Central Missouri State University, Martin 136, Warrensburg, Missouri 64093 (816) 543-4840

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

J Winsor

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

CS509100

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Assessment As A Unifier of Teaching

and Research

Abstract

In this paper the authors: (1) analyze the implications of the convergence of the teaching as assessment movement and Total Quality Management; and (2) present implications for how communication pedagogy should adapt to the best of the thrusts in higher education.

Assessment As A Unifier of Teaching and Research

> Our educational system is absolutely inadequate -- not relatively [but] absolutely inadequate -- for the purposes of democracy. (1988, September 23, Kidder, "Mortimer Adler")

> A greater focus on 'process,' however, does not mean a disregard for the unique content and perspectives of the disciplines. In fact, in order to fully understand and become proficient with any of the major processes identified within the suggested goals and standards, students must be knowledgeable of and experienced in the unique applications of these processes within the disciplines. (1994, Academic Performance Standards for Missouri Schools)

> In the past, standardized, norm-referenced and criterion-referenced objective-type tests have held sway over American education. Several factors, however, have led to a movement for fundamental change in the way we assess learning. One factor is public dissatisfaction with overreliance on standardized tests, and disillusion with the relationship between test scores and a real demonstration of competence (1991, Perrone, Expanding Student Assessment)

> Dr. Deming once told the U.S. Agency for International Development to "export anything to a friendly country, except American management." Management in the United States, he says, suffers from deeply entrenched diseases that are potentially fatal unless corrected. (1986), Walton, The Deming Management Method)

Overview

Approximately four years ago our placid teaching community was awakened by news that a couple of faculty "grant swingers" had been successful in receiving a sizable grant from the Fund For The Improvement Of Post-secondary Education (FIPSE). It was designed to pilot a faculty-generated assessment initiative at our regional, comprehensive university. We were told no other faculty-sponsored grant anywhere in American higher education. Little did we know then how much we would be involved in this

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

process.

Like many universities, there happened to be a renovation of the University Studies (General Education) program in progress when the grant was received. As one means to involve as many faculty and students as possible in the shortest amount of time, all courses considered for university studies inclusion were to have an assessment component that was approved by the governing University Studies Committee.

Four overarching outcomes were selected for the University Studies program -- communicating, thinking, valuing, and interacting. Each course proposed was expected to emphasize and be a means to contribute to assessing at least two of the four outcomes. Two of the authors were selected to serve as two of the four university-wide outcomes team leaders.

The assessment initiative was spawned by an effort to apply many of the principles of total quality management (TQM) as possible to our particular institution of higher education. Our university version of TQM has been christened CPI (for continuous process improvement). The Department of Communication contained two of the original ten programs that started the TQM-driven CPI process on our campus. The two majors were organizational communication and journalism.

Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to: (1) identify the nature of transformations suggested by the convergence of assessment-driven education and the total quality management movement; and (2) to recommend directions Communication Department faculty may take to

be responsive to the positive aspects of these contemporary initiatives.

Changes

General educational changes are implied by the merger of the themes of assessment and total quality management. One outgrowth of the so-called "taxpayer revolt" is the notion of accountability. From the perspective of higher education, the question being put before us is simply, "How do we demonstrate that significant outcomes (value added) occur from the university experience in general and the major in particular." Without demonstrable, substantive improvement taxpayers appear unwilling to fund higher education at any substantially higher levels. If we have no clear, specific methodology to answer the above question we can and should expect the worst.

Marzano, Pickering, & McTighe (1993) indicate the relationship between assessment and learning. Say they:

> Assessment is integral to learning. Assessment directly affects learning by providing essential feedback to students and teachers. It also affects learning indirectly, because assessment drives the curriculum in many ways. eg., teachers teach and students study for the tests. (p. 11)

Further, the movements challenge us to examine the delivery systems, philosophies of instruction, and the fundamental relationship of learning and the learner. We shall attempt to illustrate what we believe are the salient, apparent dichotomies implied between contemporary educational practice in higher education and what will be expected as these movement conver-

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

gences gain momentum as we predict they will.

Figure 1

Changing From:	Changing To:
Viewing the instructor as dispenser of knowledge	Transactional model where the responsibility is for learner to construct knowledge
Classroom that is teacher centered; lecture primarily; discussion secondarily	Classroom that is student centered; where teacher is in a facilitator role
Gaining information from the teacher	Developing the student's ability to think, communicate, value, and interact with their learning environment

The implication of these directional changes is important. The lecture may be an experience traditionally enjoyed more by faculty than an entity that functions as an excellent educational experience for many students. It is not that all lectures are inherently flawed (not that faculty who are relying on lecturing are doing something wrong) but, from the perspective of ultimate student development, it brings into question the notion that there might be a more effective way to teach.

We find faculty are reluctant to relinquish their "educational pulpits." Many faculty have learned to "do lecture" well (by self-judgment at least) and wish to not "fix what appears not broken."

Indications are on our campus that learning methodologies preferred by first-time freshmen are approximately as follows: (1) visual -- fifty percent; (2) kinesthetic (hands-on) -- twenty-five percent; and (3) auditory -- twenty-five percent. To the

degree that those styles of learning preferences are generalizable to other university students, the traditional lecture may not be the best fit. As Arts and Sciences college dean put it, after sharing the data at the opening convocation, "After about twenty minutes, perhaps you should move a little bit and ask if there are questions." His poetic understatement was, no doubt, well meant. However, more profound changes are requisite if we are to "adapt to our audience" as we teach in our classes.

There is a rationale here for us to consider the use of multimedia aids in the classroom, particularly television. As one of us learned to his dismay, many students appeared to prefer him as a "talking head" on video tape (Memorex) than live "at his best" in an animated lecture mode.

Surely we should practice what we preach in demonstrating some adaptation skills. Just because many of us were conditioned by radio and classroom experiences to be auditory learners does not mean that the majority of contemporary students prefer this style of instruction or learn best from it.

Being visually oriented, unfortunately, does not mean students read, let alone enjoy reading assignments. Computers with virtual reality and digital editing techniques leave more traditional "book learning" a distant "also ran" as a preference for many. The parsimonious use of lecture and/or video followed by pointed, problem-solving group activities could be the "wave of the future."

Another major reason for change lies within the education community itself -- an increased understanding of the learning process (Marzano, et al., 1993). The back-to-back basics move-

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

ment of the 1970's relied upon the behavioral psychology view of learning as an accumulation of facts and low-level skills; however, current models of learning, stemming from cognitive psychology, emphasize the constructivist view that the student must be an active participant in the learning process. This holistic view of learning, Marzano, et al. (1993) noted, is evident in education today through an emphasis on active learning, problem solving, cooperative learning, and the integration of curricula. Furthermore, they reasoned, "If learning occurs in a holistic fashion, then assessments, too, should be able to provide holistic information, not just bits of information" (Marzano, et al., 1993, p. 11).

Marzano presents a rationale for change. However, resistence to educational change is significant. Further implications for change include those that follow:

Figure 2

Changing From:	Changing To:
Separate subject matter instruction and assessment	Combined learning experience and assessment
Assessment used to rank or evaluate students	Assessment as learning; assessment as feedback
Assessment of what students know	Assessment of abilities (knowledge as ability); Assessment of what students can do; skills

Perhaps the crucial thrust of the assessment as learning movement is that knowledge by itself is relatively disconnected from "real life." When students are challenged to synthesize and

integrate as they go the process "takes" better. Demonstrated ability is a better dependent variable indices than cognitive knowledge alone regurgitated on a traditional test later. We do not indict tests themselves, but as an "end all"/"do all"/"be all" as a measure of learning we suggest they lack in comparison. Many good students will "master" subject matter either way. Those students who integrate as they go appear to be able to recognize the connectedness of content more readily and generate a variety of artifacts of such beyond paper and pencil scores.

Two themes appear to run true through human experience -- change is inevitable and many, if not most of us, find change threatening. Nowhere in higher education have we seen a "Moses and the Tablets" experience regarding how we should teach or what should constitute an undergraduate experience called a degree. The prevalent course model -- passing at least one hundred twenty four hours strategically distributed between general studies, the major, and the minor plus a few approved electives equals university degree -- perhaps has occupied the ground of contemporary presumption.

The assessment as learning and T.Q.M. convergence may suggest to faculty that a university degree should be granted only when agreed upon abilities can be demonstrated. This might well be accomplished in three years or never, depending upon the ability and motivation of the learner. Multiple, criteria-referenced assessments easily could replace grades (or, more likely, augment them) and serve as the thresholds for clearance. Would it not be fair to say more employers are more interested in what a graduate <u>can do</u> (and how demonstrated) than what they know

(shown primarily on cognitive, paper-and-pencil examinations so often not connected to specific "real-life" skills?

Figure 3

Changing From:	Changing To:
Evaluation is linear, the sum of all parts; ("product oriented")	Assessment is continuous; feedback is part and parcel of learning ("process oriented")
Paper & Pencil tests ("Standardized Tests")	Real-world tasks: criteria-referenced assessments (authentic)
A competitive model	A collaborative model

The so-called "hidden curriculum" (unstated, but persistent teaching/learning values) includes: (1) competition; (2) middle-class values; and (3) preparation for consumption (materialism) is present in education. Browne and Keeley (1990) speak of hidden assumptions and hidden maneuvers when they note:

> Assumptions are: (1) hidden or unstated; (2) taken for granted; (3) influential in determining the conclusion; (4) necessary, if the reasoning is to make sense; and (5) potentially deceptive (p. 42).

As educators we must be discerning regarding what curricular assumptions are valid and.what are merely fads parading in the language of lambs.

Often the experience of five and six year olds is competitive. Who can run the fastest, read the soonest (make the elite Bluebird Reading Group), build the neatest, biggest sand castle in the sandpile, etc. All are antithetical to the skills most needed in contemporary society. The collaborative learning model

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

places the teacher as facilitator of learning experiences (as one source among others), not as the dispensers of knowledge. The interactive skills of group problem solving are the bulwark of the total quality management movement in business, education, and, even now, are making advances in the military complex, government, not for profit, and the private sectors as well.

Regarding the specifics of the implications of total quality management upon American higher education the initiative has revealed a distinction between traditional leaders and contemporary managers. Leader/facilitator of education implies that instructors look to teams/small groups to do the work of learning rather than leaders serving as the sole innovators dispensing knowledge before the students (who are more passive auditors). Teaching students how to fish (discover knowledge) rather than continuing to give them fish is implied. Implications are that the tools of discovery are more valuable than simply sharing current knowledge.

The Scans Report for AMERICA 2000 (1991, June) indicates the characteristics of today's and tomorrow's schools. A summary of their implications follows:

Figure 4

Schools of Today	Schools of Tomorrow
Focus on development of basic skills	Focus on development of thinking skills
Testing separate from teaching	Assessment integral to teaching
Recitation and recall from short-term memory	Students actively construct knowledge for themselves

Students work as individuals	Cooperative problem solving
Hierarchically-sequenced, basics before higher order	Skills learned in context of real problems
Supervision by administration	Learner-centered, not leadership teacher directed
Only some students learn to think	All students learn to think

(U.S. Department of Labor)

In particular we salute the movement from the hidden curriculum emphasis on competition to a stated curriculum of cooperative, problem-solving activities. Coupled with collaborative learning approaches (rather than the contemporary, instructor-centered classroom) we believe will be a challenge for faculty classroom mangers to accept.

Managers tend to be predictable and safe. They prefer order (the way we have always done it). Leaders inspire useful change. While managers are needed to consolidate change, higher education well may have been too replete with "play it safe" thinking. Actually a balance of both managers and leaders is the ideal.

T.Q.M. theorists suggest that everything is a process. Teaching is a process. And, if it is a process, it has potential for continuous improvement. There remains a need to eliminate non-value added (nonproductive work) in order to produce the maximum impact with the least maintenance costs. Hence, we have adopted the continuous process improvement model and are attempting to implement it at a comprehensive state university.

T.Q.M. proponents indicate we should compare continuously the existing process with the most ideal process. One application would be comparing existing processes -- creating a knowledge base -- and the newer model -- outcomes-based assessment.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Process inputs, output, and improvements must be measurable.

This systems model outgrowth has implications that the reward system should recognize positive change toward collaborate growth of the organization. Too often promotion and merit pay systems recognize the individual more than the collaborative group. If "two heads are better than one," rewarding collaborative efforts, rather than creating further competition is more productive.

The suggestions we recommend are aligned with what Hutchings (1993) suggests in an article entitled "Principles of Good Practice for Assessing Student Learning." Says she, "There is no one best way of conducting an assessment, we know, but effective practices do have features in common" (p. 6). Perhaps some of the following philosophical positions and approaches we have taken will be useful to others in their departments.

Borrowing heavily from Hutchings we support the following philosophies:

(1) assessment is not an end in itself. It is a vehicle for educational improvement. There is no excuse for only assessing what is easy/convenient and forsaking the difficult and challenging; (2) assessment should be based upon the notion that learning is complex, multi-dimensional, and integrated; it is best evaluated in abilities to accomplish tasks over time; (3) assessment assumes a knowledge of institutional/departmental mission, course design, and the understanding of the students' own goals; (4) assessment necessitates attention to outcomes and the experiences that lead to

them; knowing which students learn best under what conditions is central to effectiveness; (5) assessment is not a hypodermic/"one-shot" phenomena; it should be ongoing; (6) assessment is best if the entire academic community is involved; (7) information is very important; demonstrated ability has even a higher priority for assessment; (8) assessment is a part of the process of change; promoting positive change is a part of the assessment movement; (9) there is no one, single best way to assess; and (10) effective assessment is being responsible to students and to the public. (p. 7)

We believe assessment and all educational change should be grounded in clear philosophical and pedagogically sound principles.

We recommend a process for creating ability assessment activities. The steps we have adapted are as follows:

(1) Decide which outcome(s) (learner goals) you wish to address; (2) examine the text, lecture materials, videos and/or audios, etc. (the content materials); (3) decide what you want the students' final products to include (written report, oral presentation, video, debate, script, poster, etc.); (4) identify the specific skills students will need for successful completion of the task; (5) indicate the activities which will enable you to observe student progress toward the finished product (outlining, process report, etc.); (6) provide a variety of activities that honor different learning styles and diverse intelligences; (7) develop a scoring rubric which clearly identifies the performance

standards by which the product will be evaluated/graded (criteria references, ability observations preferred).

Regarding number seven (scoring rubric) the following suggestions apply:

(1) scoring criteria must target goals/objectives of learning that are being assessed; (2) scoring criteria normally are best if developed at the same time task is designed; (3) task instructions should infer clearly scoring criteria; (4) task should be complex enough to infer a number and variety of scoring criteria; (5) tasks with only one correct response (right or wrong answer) will make development of scoring criteria very difficult (and, in many cases, may not be "real life"; and (6) students of average ability should be able to tell from the instructions what the scoring criteria are; those who can't tell should be given further explanation, or criteria written on a task instruction sheet.

We believe most faculty familiar with evaluating oral performances have developed such assessment instruments; they may not recognize that an assessment instrument/scoring rubric are simply other ways of describing the process often done by communication instructors.

In application of these principles we have adopted several approaches for assessment within the department of communication. For example, from the consumer perspective, we have conducted one regional and two national studies of what knowledge base, skills, competencies, etc. are expected by employers who typically may hire our entry-level graduates. (See Communication Education,

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Vol. 38, January, 1989, pp. 6-14) A 1994 an update of this study was presented at the April, 1995 Central States Communication Association). We believe the importance of specific communication abilities has been supported in these studies.

Second, we have established a professional advisory board. (see Association for Communication Administration Bulletin, Issue 78, October 1991, pp. 50-56) The professional advisory board meet twice during the academic year (Fall and Spring). A portion of their mission is the evaluation/assessment of the curriculum, instruction, etc. of the department.

Third, we have committed ourselves to "capstone" experiences for each of our majors with assessment feedback as a hallmark. For our organizational communication major the capstone experience will be an internship. Here professional assessment is the major focus. For our BS degree it is anticipated that the student will be asked to perform a senior recital for the approval of the faculty. And for our BA degree sequence a culturally-diverse study (preferably abroad) is anticipated as the major component of the capstone, integrating experience.

Further, we have adopted a portfolio approach to assessment. Each student will present at least one artifact of their work in each major's class for inclusion in their portfolio. For example, in the interviewing class a video tape of the student being interviewed by a peer is included in the folder for examination by an inside (faculty) or outside (professional) assessor. Our Professional Advisory Board functions as an outside assessor in this capacity.

Finally, our approach has led us to the development of a

mission statement of four or less outcomes for each major in the department. We are in the process of examining our curriculum requirements for any unnecessary overlap/duplication as well as areas where students likely will be underprepared to meet portions of the outcomes for the major. A matrix of what knowledge base, skills, competencies, etc. each course is designed to produce has been constructed for our organizational communication major. This has led us to a curriculum review of all our majors and to modification of content in several courses.

Summary

Assessment has become a "buzz word" in the communication and other departments at our institution. It is embraced by some, criticized by others, and some have attempted to remain relatively apathetic. However, we believe that the result has been better education delivered for taxpayers and, most importantly, better preparation for our students. We believe assessment and the continuous process improvement as learning models are here to stay and we wish to remain as close to the forefront as possible.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

References

Academic performance standards for Missouri schools. (1994, May). Jefferson City, MO: State Department of Education, 4-6.

Browne, M. N. & Keeley, S. M. (1990). Asking the right questions: a guide to critical thinking, 3rd ed. Prentice-Hall.

Curtis, Dan B., Graves, John & Winsor, Jerry L. (1991, October). Establishing a departmental professional advisory board. Association for Communication Administration, Issue 78, 50-56.

Curtis, Dan B., Winsor, Jerry L. & Stephens, Ronald D. (1989 January). National preferences in business and communication education. Communication Education, Vol 38, 6-14.

Hutchings, Pat. (1993, January-February). Principles of good practice for assessing student learning. Assessment Update 5:1, 6-7.

Kidder, R. M. (1988, September 23). "Mortimer Adler," Christian Science Monitor, 16-17.

Marzano R. P., Pickering & McTighe J. (1993). Assessing student outcomes. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Perrone, V. (1991). Expanding student assessment. VA: ASCD.

Scans Report for AMERICA 2000. (1991, June). Secretary's commission on achieving necessary skills, U.S. Department of Labor.

Walton, Mary. (1986). The Deming management method. New York: Perigee Books.